

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OREP, IN
SUBJECT: CODEL WILLIAMS/STEVENS; WRAP-UP

1. SUMMARY: CODEL'S VISIT WAS A CHEERFUL ONE, SERVING TO
UNDERScore THE GROWING BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP LINKING OUR TWO
GOVTS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SEVERAL EXCHANGES ON NUCLEAR
PROLIFERATION, SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT WAS LARGELY LIMITED TO
FAMILIARIZING SENATORS WITH INDIAN SITUATION.

END SUMMARY.

2. CODEL COMPOSED OF SENATORS WILLIAMS (CHARIMAN), STEVENS
(CO-CHAIRMAN), CANNON, RIBICOFF AND HOLLINGS, THEIR WIVES, AND
ELEVEN STAFF VISITED INDIA JANUARY 5-7 AT THE INVITATION OF
THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT. ACCORDING TO THE INDIAN VICE PRESIDENT,
CODEL WILLIAMS/STEVENS AND ITS COMPANION CODEL WOLFF
FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ARE THE FIRST US CONGRESSIONAL
DELEGATIONS TO VISIT INDIA AT THE REQUEST OF THE PARLIAMENT
SINCE 1965. SINCE THE INDIAN HOSTS HAD NO ISSUES THEY WISHED
TO TAKE UP WITH THE DELEGATION PER SE, THE PRINCIPAL FUNCTION
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OF THE VISIT WAS TO SYMBOLIZE THE REINVIGORATED TIES OF FRIEND-
SHIP BETWEEN THE TWO GOVTS. NONE OF THE SENATORS HAD HAD
A SUBSTANTIVE VISIT TO INDIA BEFORE (HOLLINGS HAD ATTENDED THE
IPU MEETING HERE IN THE EARLY 70'S). THE VISIT THUS SERVED
THE SECOND PURPOSE OF FAMILIARIZATION WITH THE INDIAN SITUATION.

3. THE DELEGATION'S SCHEDULE WAS QUITE FULL BECAUSE OF THE NEED

TO COMBINE CONTACTS WITH THEIR PARLIAMENTARY HOSTS WITH CALLS ON SENIOR GOVT OFFICIALS. ON THE PARLIAMENTARY SIDE, THE CODEL MET WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT AND WITH THE DEPUTY HEADS OF THE TWO HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, AND ATTENDED AN INFORMAL LUNCH AND A FORMAL DINNER GIVEN BY THEIR HOSTS. AT THE LUNCH THEY ALSO MET A NUMBER OF CABINET MINISTERS ON WHOM FORMAL CALLS HAD NOT BEEN SCHEDULED, SUCH AS THE MINISTERS OF INDUSTRY, RAILWAYS, EDUCATION AND INFORMATION. WHAT MOST IMPRESSED THESENATORS FROM THESE PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF PROLONGED IMPRISONMENT SUFFERED BY OPPOSITION POLITICAL FIGURES DURING THE EMERGENCY. THIS DRAMATIZED THE DEPTH OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PROCESSES IN INDIA.

4. IN FORMAL CALLS THESENATORS ALSO MET WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTERS, AND THE HEAD OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION. THESE CALLS LASTED ONE-HALF HOUR EACH AND TOOK THE FORM OF QUESTION-AND-ANSWER DISCUSSIONS. IN ADDITION, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY GAVE THE DELEGATION A ONE-HOUR PRESENTATION ON THE BROAD SCOPE OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY WHICH EMPHASIZED THE NATIONAL GOAL OF COOPERATION WITH NEIGHBORING STATES AND WITH THE REST OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. BY FAR THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ISSUE DISCUSSED, AND VIRTUALLY THE ONLY ONE ON WHICH THERE WAS ANY CONTROVERSY, WAS NUCLEAR PCJLIFERATION (SEE NEW DELHI 307 AND 354 NOTAL). SENATOR RIBICOFF ALSO URGED GOI OFFICIALS TO TAKE A MORE OUTSPOKEN ROLE IN DEFENSE OF INDIA'S OWN INTERESTS IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS, WHILE NOT BLINDLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ATTACKING THE US AS THE SOURCE OF THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS. TO THESE REMARKS, AND TO SIMILAR COMMENTS ABOUT INDIA'S LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE NUCLEAR QUESTION, GOI OFFICIALS CONSISTENTLY REPLIED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SOUGHT NO SUCH PROMINENCE (AT SENATOR HOLLINGS REFERENCE TO PRIMAJMINISTER DESAI AS A "WORLD LEADER", DESAI INTERRUPTED TO REPLY, "I'M ONLY A PUBLIC SERVANT".) DEFENSE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM AGAIN TOOK THE OCCASION OF A CONGRESSIONAL VISIT TO CRITICIZE RESTRICTIVE US ARMS SALES POLICY (SEPTTEL).

5. WITH REGARD TO US-INDIAN RELATIONS, THE CONSISTENT THEME OF GOI OFFICIALS WAS THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL BASES FOR FRIENDSHIP SHOULD BE STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND THE STRAINS OF PARTICULAR DISAGREEMENTS. DESAI TOLD THE SENATORS THAT HIS GOAL WAS TO BUILD UP THE RELATIONSHIP "SO THAT NO ONE CAN SPOIL IT IN THE FUTURE"

6. COMMENT: THE CODEL VISIT WAS IN THE WAKE OF THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT BOTH IN TIMING AND IN SUBSTANCE. IT REINFORCED THE CURRENT WAVE OF FRIENDLY FEELING TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY CONCENTRATING PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THE PROLIFERATION ISSUE.

GOHEEN

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